

## Fire-Resistant Construction and Space Save Home

Late Saturday afternoon, September 12, 2015, Ron Steffovitch heard the fire department in the neighborhood making the mandatory call for evacuation. Ron grabbed his cat and left his Middletown, California home. The Valley Wildfire whipped by thirty mile-an-hour winds, had quickly spread and was threatening homes in this Lake County development. When the fire jumped State Highway 29 and moved into the houses in his neighborhood, the extra money and time he had spent on a concrete tile roof, cement stucco exterior and fire-resistant landscaping were put to the ultimate test.

Steffovitch, who is a gardener, had landscaped with concrete walkways, concrete pavers, a stone-lined water diversion ditch, and succulent plants. There also were green vegetable beds and flower gardens scattered around his property. Often, following wildfires, the denuded areas and fire debris allow for flooding and debris flows when the rains come. The diversion ditch that goes around the house, will serve to direct post-fire flood and debris flows away from the house.

The next day, when residents were allowed to return to survey the aftermath, Steffovitch found only minor damage to his home, while the houses on either side of him were destroyed, along with their contents.

Steffovitch said he paid \$12,500 extra for the concrete tile roof when his home was built in 2006. The block and stucco exterior had cost about the same as standard frame and siding walls, he said. A next-door neighbor is now rebuilding his destroyed home with a tile roof and stucco walls, Steffovitch said.

The choice of fire-resistant building materials plus the decision to landscape in a way that assured an abundance of open, defensible space around the house protected Steffovitch's home and possessions.

Additional information about protecting your property from wildfire can be found at [www.ready.gov/wildfires](http://www.ready.gov/wildfires), [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org), and [www.readyforwildfire.org](http://www.readyforwildfire.org).



Home with a concrete tile roof, stucco walls, concrete and pavers surround this fire resistant house.



Landscape consisting of a stone lined diversion ditch and succulent plants in garden